



2009 Legislative Session

Agency Response to State Budget Reductions

2.12.09

ECONOMIC REALITIES

Every indication we have suggests the State of Utah is experiencing a significant economic downturn. The Department of Community and Culture (DCC) is consequently confronted with unprecedented budget reductions. No organization or interest has been held harmless; every division and every program has been affected. Moreover, there is potential for future funding to be again threatened after the State receives revenue forecasts February 17.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

In October, the Legislature convened in Special Session and cut state agency budgets by four percent. Then on Day 6 of the General Session, the Legislature passed HB 3, which includes significant ongoing budget reductions for DCC's FY 2009 and 2010 budgets. Reflecting recommendations from DCC's appropriations subcommittee, some cuts were partially "backfilled" one-time in FY 2009, meaning their impact will occur in FY 2010, but they are official for FY 2009. In addition to reduced operating and travel budgets, specific programs also received reductions in staff, including two full-time positions at the State Library, one position in the Office of Ethnic Affairs, four positions at State History and four positions in Arts and Museums.

AGENCY RESPONSE

Faced with significant budget challenges, DCC is trying to make the best of an extremely difficult situation. We are seeking an updated constituent-driven model for organizational advancement, a model where academic or disciplinary silos are replaced by structures responsive to community needs and aligned with good stewardship of public resources—a model where functions are consolidated, community partners strengthened, and technology is optimized. For example, we would like to explore models which provide services like program, board and web development, as well as strategic planning, operations and curatorial expertise.

We are also committed to finding a way for ongoing technical assistance to be made available for community partners where program and personnel cuts may have a temporary impact, particularly in the areas of Folk Arts, Museums and Historic Preservation. We will seek input from our boards as we determine what those solutions are. Further, we are committed to preserving the great work of the Museum Services Board and their grants. While we are saddened by the elimination of funding for staff positions and deeply appreciate the service and dedication of those affected colleagues in all our divisions, we also value the outpouring of public support for both those employees and programs. We know they have benefited communities in a unique and meaningful way.

"IN THE MIDDLE OF DIFFICULTY LIES OPPORTUNITY" Albert Einstein

Amid a dire financial outlook and with a desire to sustain the current level of program services and financial grants, DCC leadership is reconsidering how we serve the community. We will craft our future model as a multidisciplinary, integrated approach to community-building. We will foster vision and facilitate capacity building. By optimizing public-private partnerships, we will strive to capitalize on the talents of subject matter experts, both internally and externally. We will solicit input from community partners and our capable boards to identify critical needs and align them with agency service delivery. And we will continue to work with policymakers to insure they understand and value the real benefit cultural programs provide communities, as both an economic driver and as a way to preserve cultural identity statewide.